to have been even more honored than under the Later Han. We hear of a Confucian temple built in 505, with an image of the sage in it. Some rulers favored Taoism, and Buddhism was often and, in the main, increasingly popular with the rulers. Confucian scholarship seems to have made no great gains, and to have displayed no especial creativeness, but Confucian philosophy persisted as the theory on which the state and society were supposedly chiefly grounded.

The names of some eminent men of letters have come down to us. Wang Pi, of the first half of the third century, composed commentaries on the *I Ching* and the *Tao Te Chmg,* trying to find in the former wisdom rather than divination and to make of the latter a consistent philosophic whole. The "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" of the third century were free-thinking philosophers and poets who took a Taoist outlook on life, kept largely aloof from conventional society, and lived simply—albeit fabulously. It may be that some of the Taoist texts usually ascribed to great figures of the Chou dynasty are their work. They helped, moreover, to develop the verbose, superficial, and highly artificial prose style, which during the centuries of disunion and into the succeeding period largely supplanted the concise, semi-rhythmical style of antiquity. A poet still famous was T'ao Ch'ien (365-427), who had several times been in official life but who longed for quiet and retirement. Interestingly enough, late in life he made the acquaintance of Hui Yuan, who, as we shall see presently, more than any other appears to have been responsible for the early stages of the growth of the Pure

Land School of Buddhism.

Poetry seems to have been stimulated to fresh life by the new southern environment of Chinese culture under the six dynasties, as well as by contact with Buddhism. Taoism, as we have suggested, had its influence. Many a man, weary and disillusioned by the disorders of the time, withdrew from public life to solitude or to his estates and sought to bring himself into harmony with nature, partly by the methods advocated by Taoism. Some of these recluses endeavored to express themselves in verse.

Wang Hsi-chih (321-379), one of China's most distinguished calligraphists, a Taoist by belief, belongs to these centuries.